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Security Council

Fifty-eighth year

Provisional

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Tuesday, 14 January 2003, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. de La Sablière	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Gaspar Martins
	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Chungong Ayafor
	Chile	Mr. Valdés
	China	Mr. Wang Yingfan
	Germany	Mr. Pleuger
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Pakistan	Mr. Akram
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Spain	Mr. Arias
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299)

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03-20916 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Expression of welcome to the new members of the Security Council and of thanks to the outgoing members

The President (*spoke in French*): As this is the first meeting of the Security Council this year, I should like to extend my very warm wishes for a fruitful new year to all members of the Council, the United Nations and the Secretariat.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome the new members of the Council: Angola, Chile, Germany, Pakistan and Spain. We all look forward with confidence to their participation in the work of the Council. We are convinced that their experience and wisdom will be of invaluable assistance in the discharge of the Council's enormous responsibilities.

I take this opportunity also to express the Council's deep gratitude to the outgoing members — Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore — for their important contribution to the business of the Council.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President (*spoke in French*): Equally, I take this opportunity to pay tribute on behalf of the Council to His Excellency Mr. Alfonso Valdivieso, Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of December 2002. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Valdivieso for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Children and armed conflict

Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299)

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Austria, Bahrain, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Greece, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Liechtenstein, Malawi, Monaco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, the Philippines, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine, in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Pfanzelter (Austria), Mr. Saleh (Bahrain), Mr. Nteturuye (Burundi), Mr. Laurin (Canada), Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia), Mr. Stagno (Costa Rica), Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Mr. Gallegos Chiriboga (Ecuador), Mr. Atta (Egypt), Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia), Mr. Vassilakis (Greece), Mr. Hidayat (Indonesia), Mr. Mekel (Israel), Mr. Saiga (Japan), Mr. Schurti (Liechtenstein), Mr. Lamba (Malawi), Mr. Boisson (Monaco), Mr. Swe (Myanmar), Mr. Andjaba (Namibia), Mr. Sharma (Nepal), Mr. Manalo (Philippines), Mr. Gasana (Rwanda), Mr. Rowe (Sierra Leone), Mr. Kirn (Slovenia), Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) and Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

It is so decided.

I invite the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

It is so decided.

I invite the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

Members of the Council have before them document S/2002/1299, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.

I shall now make a few preliminary comments.

The report before the Council today has been submitted pursuant to resolution 1379 (2001), adopted by consensus at the initiative of my country just over a year ago. This important report should be followed up.

Following the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), we are now in the implementation phase. It is scandalous that children should be recruited and used in armed conflict, in the light of which outrage is insufficient. We must act. The report of the Secretary-General calls on us to do so by taking stock of progress made last year and by submitting, at the Council's request, a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use children. I hope that our discussion today will allow us to define clear guidelines for the follow-up to the report. In this respect, I would recall that consultations are under way with a view to the Council's adopting a follow-up resolution.

I welcome the Secretary-General and call on him to address the Council.

The Secretary-General: Let me also begin by wishing a happy and successful new year to all. This year promises to be a tough one, but I trust that we shall be up to the challenge.

I am grateful to you, Mr. President, and to the other members of the Council for holding this meeting to discuss my report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299). This is an issue that goes to the heart of our common aim of protecting the most vulnerable of our world.

I am pleased to say that we have made steady progress in embedding the protection, rights and well-being of children affected by armed conflict into the United Nations peace and security agenda. The three resolutions adopted by the Security Council, the integration of child protection in peacekeeping mandates, the deployment of child protection advisers in selected peace missions and the development of child protection training in mission areas all attest to that fact.

I am also pleased to note the progressive development of a body of international norms and standards for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. I am referring in particular to the entry into force over the past year of two landmark international instruments: the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict — which sets the age limit for compulsory recruitment and direct participation in hostilities at 18 — and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which classifies as war crimes the conscription, enlistment or use in hostilities of children under the age of 15. Those two legal instruments, along with other norms and standards, have strengthened the international framework for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict.

Regrettably, there is far more to be done in this area. Despite the progress made in creating and strengthening the normative framework, the tragic fact is that children continue to be victimized in the most cynical and cruel manner in conflicts around the world. In addition to being forcibly conscripted by Government and rebel armies, children in conflict zones are at risk from landmines and unexploded ordnance, from abduction, from displacement and deprivation of education and basic health care, from use as forced labour in the extraction of natural resources and from sexual exploitation and abuse. These outrages continue to be perpetrated against children in far too many places, in defiance of the will of the international community. The time has come to ensure that the hard-won gains in crafting a protection regime for children are applied and put into practice on the ground.

The Security Council, in calling for a list of parties to armed conflict that use or recruit children in violation of international obligations, has taken the first important step in that regard. My report contains a list of 23 parties, including both Governments and insurgents, in five conflict situations on the Council's agenda that use or recruit children. It also highlights other conflicts not on the Council agenda where children are recruited or used.

By naming the parties that continue to recruit or use child soldiers, the international community has demonstrated its willingness to match words with deeds. Those who violate standards for the protection of children can no longer do so with impunity. The list represents an important step forward in our efforts to induce compliance with international child protection obligations by parties to conflicts. It is also the beginning of a new era of monitoring and reporting on how parties treat children during conflict. It is essential that the publication of the list be followed by systematic monitoring and reporting on compliance by listed parties, as well as the consideration of targeted measures against those who continue to flout their international obligations.

By exposing those who violate standards for the protection of children to the light of public scrutiny we are serving notice that the international community is finally willing to back expressions of concern with action. I congratulate the members of the Council on this important step and urge them to maintain their resolve in seeing this challenge through.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

Mr. Otunnu: It is very good to see you, Mr. President, back at the United Nations and at the Security Council. Your previous engagement and leadership in this arena left a mark that precedes you on this occasion.

We are very grateful for the leadership that France has been providing in the Council on the agenda for the protection of children affected by armed conflict. We recall that, but for the terrorist attacks of September 2001, the Security Council would have held a special summit that month devoted to this issue, on the initiative and under the leadership of President Jacques Chirac. We also recall that France played a key role in drafting resolution 1379 (2001), which, in part, created the basis for the list under discussion today.

Since the Security Council formally affirmed that the protection and well-being of children exposed to conflict constitute a fundamental peace and security concern that belongs on its agenda, the progressive engagement of the Council has yielded significant gains for children. Those include the three resolutions devoted to this issue — resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001) — an annual review and debate of the issue; the incorporation of child protection into peacekeeping mandates and training; the inclusion of children's concerns in country-specific reports; the creation of the role and deployment of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations; the inclusion of children's concerns in peace negotiations and accords; the direct participation of children in the deliberations of the Security Council; increasing focus on children in post-conflict programmes in situations such as Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan; and regular engagement with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the context of Arria formula consultations. I congratulate the Security Council on those major achievements.

Parallel to those important developments in the Council, tremendous progress has been made over the last few years to strengthen and codify international norms and standards for protecting children exposed to war. As the Secretary-General has just indicated, key international instruments that have entered into force over this period include the Optional Protocol, the Rome Statute, Convention No. 182 of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

We now have in place a very impressive body of norms and standards. We have in place a comprehensive set of principles and measures set out in the three Security Council resolutions to which I have referred. A lot of progress has been achieved outside the framework of the United Nations, particularly through the advocacy and activities of NGOs, civil society organizations and regional organizations. There has also been a significant increase in public and official awareness of children exposed to war.

We have now reached a critical juncture in the development of this agenda. With these gains in place, what should be the next steps in the development of this agenda? The most pressing challenge facing us collectively is how to translate the principles, standards and measures that have been put in place into facts on the ground — into a protective regime that can save children in danger. For this, as the Secretary-General has called for, it is imperative to embark on an era of application; the Security Council is well placed to lead the way by its example and its action. As we embark on such an era of application, two issues above all will test

our collective resolve to make a real difference on the ground.

First, we need to ensure systematic monitoring and reporting on the conduct of parties to conflict. This is not a proposal for some general and dispersed exercise. It is a project focusing on compliance with a set of agreed and very specific obligations and commitments concerning the protection of children, most of which are laid out in equally specific instruments and commitments.

Secondly, information received through such monitoring and reporting must serve as a trigger for action, a trigger for the application of concerted pressure and targeted measures against violators. When information is received about grave violations against children and no action is taken, it betrays the trust of the children.

There are other measures which are critical to translating the concept of an era of application into a meaningful reality. We need to redouble our efforts to ensure that the concerns of children are included in all peace negotiations and peace accords; that the rehabilitation of children becomes a central component of any post-conflict programme; that there is full integration of child protection in all aspects of peacekeeping mandates, training and activities; that the deployment of child protection advisers becomes a general practice in all peace operations; that, with the establishment of the International Criminal Court, we work to ensure that individuals responsible for war crimes against children will be among the first to be prosecuted in that Court; and that all reports to the Security Council on country-specific situations include the protection of children as a specific aspect of the reports. In most of those areas, the Security Council has a key role to play.

In resolution 1379 (2001) the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to provide a list of parties that use or recruit children in situations of conflict of which the Council is seized. The list annexed to the present report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299) breaks new ground: for the first time, an official report has specifically named and listed those responsible for brutalizing children in situations of conflict. The list signals a move towards the era of application. It puts on notice parties to conflict that exploit and brutalize children that the international community is watching and will hold them accountable for their action. In this respect, therefore, the list represents the thin end of the wedge, leading to systematic monitoring and reporting on the conduct of parties to conflict.

The present report and the list are confined to situations that are on the agenda of the Security Council. There are other situations of equal concern, which have been discussed and included in the main body of the Secretary-General's report. There are other conflict situations where the use of child soldiers by certain parties to conflict is widespread. They include Colombia, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, the Sudan, Uganda and Sri Lanka. The list provides an important opportunity for the Security Council to respond by sending the clearest message of its determination to embark on an era of application by holding parties responsible for their actions.

In that connection, I recommend the following measures for the Council's consideration: a call on the parties on the list to immediately end recruiting and using child soldiers and to provide full information on measures they have taken to this effect; consider taking targeted measures against parties where substantial progress is not found to have been made — such measures should include imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, a ban on the export or supply of arms to those groups, and restriction on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned; and a comprehensive list in the next report of the Secretary-General to include all parties involved in armed conflict which continue to recruit and use child soldiers.

For practical reasons, the present list is limited to the phenomenon of child soldiering. That is only one aspect of the impact of war on children; there are many other equally grave dimensions of the impact of conflict on children. All child victims of war deserve the attention and protection of the international community.

Developments unfolding in the occupied Palestinian territories and Israel are a matter of great pain and preoccupation. They have grave impact on children. As the Secretary-General's report indicates, his Personal Envoy reported last August that stricter closures, curfews, roadblocks and checkpoints have created humanitarian problems including frequent school closures in the West Bank and Gaza and a drop

in immunization levels among Palestinian children. In this context, I call on the Israeli authorities to abide fully by their international human rights and humanitarian legal obligations concerning the protection, the rights and the well-being of Palestinian children.

The use of suicide bombing is entirely unacceptable. Nothing can justify it. We have witnessed child victims at both ends of these acts: children have been used as suicide bombers, and children have been killed by suicide bombings. I call on the Palestinian authorities to do everything within their power to stop all participation by children in this conflict.

I am deeply concerned about the tragic turn of events in Côte d'Ivoire, a country which for so long exemplified peace, prosperity and solidarity in Africa. This has been broken by the drums of war, which are now beginning to reach the children. No efforts should be spared to preserve unity and peace in that country, to ensure the protection of children and to prevent their engagement in the conflict.

Much has been put in place by the Security Council. Now everything must be done to translate those principles, norms and measures into a protective reality for millions of children who are exposed to war. I am eager to work closely with the Council to fulfil its promise to those children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict for his statement and for the kind words he addressed to me.

I now give the floor to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund.

Ms. Bellamy: Twice in the past year, the voices of children were heard in this Chamber. The most recent occasion involved three young delegates to the Children's Forum of the special session of the General Assembly on children. "The best thing you can do is stop war", said Eliza Kantardzic, a 17-year-old from Bosnia and Herzegovina. She went on to say, "You are making decisions here that affect whole nations ... I hope you will remember my words." (*S/PV.4528, p. 8*)

Can there be a more persuasive reason to act than the anguish of these children? For it is they who represent the succeeding generations that the United Nations was founded to save — and it is we who have the power to halt the suffering that is endured by so many children in so many countries.

Since the Council's approval of resolution 1379 (2001), a series of global commitments have been renewed and strengthened, notably at the special session on children last May, when world leaders pledged to protect children from the ravages of war.

The spirit of global commitment was also very much in evidence at the special session on HIV/AIDS held in 2001, when the Security Council explicitly recognized HIV/AIDS as a threat to international security.

Under the terms of these commitments, Governments have pledged to ensure that children do not grow up in displacement camps, without access to nutrition, health care and education; that they are not recruited into armed forces and groups; and that those who subject children to violence and abuse are held accountable.

In the past year, the Council has acquired a new and important mechanism for generating public scrutiny of those who recruit and use children in armed conflict. I refer — as my colleague Olara Otunnu did a moment ago — to the Secretary-General's list of parties to armed conflict. UNICEF is convinced that the naming and shaming of these parties to conflict will help establish a culture of accountability — one that can prevent such abuses from occurring in future.

That is why we urge Council members to consider the Secretary-General's list in all their deliberations and to update it regularly, expanding its scope to include parties to armed conflict in situations that are not now on the Council's agenda. For the list can be used not only to pressure those who violate children's rights, but also to support and encourage progress and to measure steps forward.

For our part, UNICEF will use the list to intensify our advocacy efforts, both globally and locally. It is a key that can open the door to negotiations and to dialogue — and, ultimately, to the demobilization and the reintegration of children. We are already working with a number of parties on the list.

UNICEF welcomes all the contributions of civil society to this effort. For example, the report prepared by the non-governmental organization Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has provided an

additional tool for advocacy work. It shows the importance of providing information to the Council about the impact of conflict on children — information that comes not only from United Nations sources.

The demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers is a top priority for UNICEF and for our partners, because it is key to breaking the cycle of violence against children during conflict. This is equally true after peace agreements, which must of necessity include specific commitments to disarm, demobilize and reintegrate children who have been used in hostilities.

In Sri Lanka, we think that there is an opportunity for a large-scale demobilization of child soldiers, and we are working with the Government as well as with non-State actors.

In the Great Lakes area of central Africa, we are taking a regional approach with partners such as the World Bank, other United Nations agencies, donor Governments and regional officials to develop a Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Programme.

In Angola, there is an urgent need to provide support to the estimated 8,000 children who were recruited during the civil war and who have been released without a formal demobilization effort.

At any given time, 300,000 children across the globe are estimated to be serving as child soldiers. They are living proof of the world's systematic failure to protect children, and that is why our work is focused on building a protective environment for children.

A protective environment for demobilized child soldiers must include effective strategies to prevent their re-recruitment, and it must help lay the groundwork for their eventual return to their families and to their communities. From our perspective, this will involve long-term investment in education, vocational training and support for families and communities that takes into account in particular the specific needs of girls.

Over the past year, we have heard allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse of refugee and internally displaced children and women in West Africa by humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel. Those allegations served as a wake-up call for the entire humanitarian community.

While the first reports of such outrages came from West Africa, we know that no region or country is immune. Make no mistake — this is an issue that poses an ongoing challenge for the entire United Nations community. While sexual exploitation and abuse are always egregious, the involvement of aid workers or peacekeepers is simply intolerable.

There is, however, some encouraging news, and that is the swift response by the entire humanitarian community — with strong United Nations support and leadership. The Inter-Agency Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, of which we are a co-chair, has taken immediate steps to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. Its Plan of Action, which has been endorsed by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, calls for the adoption of six core principles for a code of conduct that describes minimum standards of behaviour for all humanitarian and United Nations workers.

In this connection, I call on the Security Council to follow up on its recent presidential statement on the protection of civilians, in which it encouraged States, in particular troop-contributing countries, to adopt the six core principles to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation.

It is vital that the United Nations system and those countries that contribute troops for peacekeeping operations be mobilized to protect children and women, and that they develop appropriate disciplinary and accountability mechanisms.

This meeting will soon be over, and the Council will move on to other important issues that demand its attention. Much has been achieved in its deliberations over the last four years — I think they were recounted very clearly by Olara Otunnu — and for that we also thank the Council very much. But more is required if we are to make the protection of children an explicit priority in actions to build peace and to resolve conflict.

Over the years, responsible adults the world over have made good-faith promises to children — promises to ease suffering and end exploitation, and to protect children from the loss of childhood, from rape, mutilation and recruitment as child soldiers. Yet time after time, in places such as Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Sudan, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Colombia and East Timor, cruelty and indifference have prevailed.

We need to do more about accountability; we need to do more about impunity; we need to do more about training. We must find effective ways to promote peace-building and conflict prevention, and we must recognize that, when it comes to the suffering of children in conflict, each and every one of us is accountable.

For now, our expectation is that the Council will never cease to find ways to ensure that its words become deeds — deeds that make a real difference to the lives of children.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund for her statement.

Mr. Pleuger (Germany): "Helpless outrage is a characteristic emotion of the global age", a journalist writing about child war amputees from Freetown recently observed. I think that all of us feel outrage at the devastating effect of armed conflict on children. We are outraged at the cynicism and cruelty of adults who steal the childhood of boys and girls by making them fight in their wars.

The Council is one of the few bodies in the world that does not have to confine itself to "helpless outrage". The Council can act. Germany is very pleased at the coincidence that its first public address to the Council should deal with children and armed conflict. This issue belongs firmly on the Council's agenda. Germany will do whatever it can to ensure that we do not stop at debate but also take action. We must do this also out of respect for the dedicated work of women and men in non-governmental organizations, in the United Nations system and elsewhere, as was demonstrated once again by yesterday's Arria format meeting.

We thank the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their opening remarks and for their reminders that we need practical and concrete progress on the pressing issues facing us.

Germany welcomes this year's report by the Secretary-General.

We believe it is an outspoken and focused report. We are pleased with the forthright manner in which the Special Representative has taken up the task entrusted to him by the Council to name those countries that recruit or use children in armed conflict in violation of their international obligations. We especially welcome the fact that the report is not limited to those five countries that are currently on the Council's agenda. This has ensured that many of the worst offenders, including the worst offender, have been brought to the Council's attention. We give our express encouragement to the Special Representative to continue to report on child soldier recruitment in any conflict, without any geographic or other restrictions.

At the time of the last open debate on this item, in November 2001, the Secretary-General had rightly pointed out that we needed to enter an era of application. Application is even more urgent today than it was then. The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) has come into force. It lists the conscription, enlistment or use in hostilities of children under the age of 15 as a war crime. We urge all States to ratify the ICC Statute and thus to join hands in the fight against impunity from crimes that shock the consciences of all. The entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict also constitutes a milestone on the road to ending recruitment of child soldiers.

Germany fully supports the Special Representative's call for a vigorous monitoring effort by the United Nations to ensure that States fulfil their international obligations. The list annexed to this report is an important starting point. However, monitoring will only succeed if those who refuse to cooperate and to act upon their international obligations face consequences. We support every effort of the Council to add bite to these monitoring efforts. And we support Olara Otunnu's concept of systematic monitoring as a trigger for action, as just set out in his opening remarks.

The Council has made promising progress towards including the rights of the child in its deliberations and actions with regard to specific country situations. The inclusion of child protection units in peacekeeping operations in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, most recently, Angola has helped to bring the problem into sharp relief. We are eager to hear about further results from these new components of peacekeeping operations. Germany considers it crucial that the Council take the rights of the child into account in all its country-specific actions. The problems facing us are by no means confined to the three aforementioned countries of Africa.

Urgent action is needed in many other fields as well. The Secretary-General's report once again deals with the cruel effects of anti-personnel mines on children. Germany is strongly committed to the fight against anti-personnel landmines. It is crucial to enhance these efforts and to coordinate efforts in mine action. This is a field where every additional effort yields immediate results. Each mine we clear saves lives.

We share the Secretary-General's dismay at the disappointing progress made so far in curtailing the availability of small arms and light weapons. This directly contributes to the recruitment of child soldiers. Germany urges clear progress at this year's conference on the implementation of the Programme of Action on small arms.

Many more pressing matters in this debate call for urgent action. They include the aspects of gender, humanitarian access and sexual exploitation — also by peacekeepers. Some of these will be touched upon by my colleague from Greece in his statement for the European Union, with which Germany fully associates itself.

The Council will hopefully soon adopt a further resolution on children and armed conflict. Germany has joined other members of the Council to make the draft resolution as action-oriented as possible. We warmly thank the French presidency for its great dedication and expertise in chairing these complex negotiations.

Allow me to conclude by saying that the Secretary-General's report underscores the importance of the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict. We believe that both UNICEF and the Special Representative, as well as other actors in the United Nations system, have crucial and complementary roles to play in this field. We encourage them and all Member States to join efforts in a spirit of common purpose.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Germany for the kind words he addressed to my delegation.

Mr. Gaspar Martins (Angola): At the outset, Sir, allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council. This is the first public meeting of the Security Council this year, 2003, a year full of challenges which I am sure this Council will be ready to meet. I likewise commend the outgoing presidency of the Security Council for its uncompromising commitment and dedication to the advancement of the cause of peace and security in the international arena.

This constitutes the first public meeting in which the Republic of Angola is called upon to take the floor in its capacity as a non-permanent member of this body. It seems fit that the issue before us is enhancing the protection of children from the carnage of armed conflicts, both as victims and as participants.

This Organization's relentless dedication to the protection of children in times of conflict is reflected in, among other things, Security Council resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001). Furthermore, my Government welcomes the Secretary-General's report on children and armed conflict, document S/2002/1299. It informs us of the progress made in the protection of the rights of children in conflict situations. We note with concern the list of Governments and insurgent groups that continue to recruit and use child soldiers in all conflicts, including those that are not on the Council's agenda. We believe this to be an important step forward in persuading and encouraging Governments and other parties to observe international rules on child protection.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and express our heartfelt gratitude for the work of Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, as well as our gratitude to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Ms. Carol Bellamy for their efforts to protect the rights of children and to advance the cause of children in general. I also thank Mr. Otunnu and Ms. Bellamy for their opening remarks.

In many countries of the world, children are the primary victims of armed conflicts. As combatants or civilians they are exposed to atrocities that create thousands of orphans lacking access to basic education, food and sanitation, and subject to extreme suffering such as torture, starvation, exposure to land mines and other human rights abuses. In this context, girls are often forced into combatant roles or forced into a life of slavery. These practices are utterly condemnable, constitute violations of basic human rights and freedoms and are a menace to international peace and security.

To advance the protection of the rights of children in conflict situations we welcome the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The former breaks new ground in the protection of children by not distinguishing between Governments and insurgencies in the application of international law. The latter instrument constitutes an important complement to the former by providing a mechanism of accountability.

The aforementioned instruments address the concerns of the international community over the persistent violation of the rights of children in conflict situations, and we encourage Member States to redouble their efforts to join in the consensus. However, the long list of Governments and insurgencies that actively recruit and use children in conflicts indicates the need for the Council to redouble its efforts in the area of the prevention and resolution of conflicts. Conflict prevention and resolution is the best way to protect children. While crisis management can alleviate the adverse affects of conflicts on children, crisis prevention and resolution provide for the opportunity to permanently address the protection of children and the enactment of a culture of respect for the rights of children by integrating those issues into the political processes for conflict resolution as well as into demobilization and reintegration programmes.

Angola is mentioned in the Secretary-General's report as a country affected by war. Angola is aware that respect for and the protection and promotion of children's rights are important in conflict situations. After more than 27 years of civil war, we have experienced the dramatic effects of war on children. A generation of Angolans was born and raised under conditions of war and emergency. More than 100,000 children were separated from their families. Many of them witnessed the death of family members and others. More than 4 million people have been displaced, generating approximately 60,000 orphans.

Aware of its responsibilities, the Government of Angola has adopted and is implementing a broad programme to help those children affected by war, which incorporates access to basic services from birth certificates to education, basic health care, vaccination and access to clean water. While the Government of Angola initiated these efforts during the war, we expect greater progress to be achieved under peace and within the context of national reconciliation and reconstruction now under way.

To sustain our commitment to promoting the revival and strengthening of local and international norms and value systems to protect children and to achieve our common goal of building a world fit for children a strong commitment will be required from all States. We support the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report and also his continuing work in this field and his efforts to keep the Council informed.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of conflict prevention as a tool for the protection of children. Prevention is often better than the cure of the illness itself.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to thank you for convening this important meeting. We especially appreciate the considerable efforts made by France and its leadership in this regard. We would also like to express our thanks to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his continuing follow-up on this issue and for the important statement he made at the beginning of this meeting. I would also like to express our thanks to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, and to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), for their efforts in following up on the issues before the Security Council related to children.

The issue of children and armed conflict is very important. The fact that the Security Council is meeting for a third time to debate this issue, including the report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299), and to discuss the implementation of resolution 1379 (2001) and previous resolutions shows the importance and seriousness that the Security Council attaches to this issue and to its follow-up. We hope that this meeting will lead to an effective plan to protect children in situations of armed conflict in general and under foreign occupation in particular.

The delegation of the Syrian Arab Republic has very carefully read the report of the Secretary-General. The report refers to real problems that the world's children face. We fully support the Secretary-General's view, expressed in his statement this morning, on the need to integrate the protection of children into all aspects related to the maintenance of international peace and security.

Reports submitted to the Security Council over the past year have led us to concentrate on the plight of children affected by armed conflict. We believe that the plight of young girls affected by armed conflict deserves more attention and follow-up by the Security Council.

The way that the Israeli occupation authorities have killed hundreds of Palestinian children has been etched in our conscience and our memory. Muhammad Al-Durrah, the child killed next to his father, and Iman Hajju, the baby girl whose body was desecrated by the occupying forces' bullets, must be remembered. The perpetrators of such tragedies must be brought to justice.

The Security Council has attached great importance to the issue of the recruitment of children in armed conflict. Presidential statements and Security Council resolutions have urged parties to conflicts to cease recruiting children in armed conflicts, whether they be in Africa, Asia, or any other areas of conflict. In our region, we have witnessed the effects of armed conflict on children. We believe that the situation of children under foreign occupation must be dealt with seriously in order to address that catastrophic situation in a cooperative effort to put an end to the suffering of thousands of innocent children.

This in no way implies that we wish to focus on certain elements at the expense of other important aspects. We believe that all issues referred to in the provisions of resolution 1379 (2001) must be taken up on an equal footing. The resolution contains very important provisions on the protection of children in armed conflict and under foreign occupation.

My delegation believes that the best way to address issues relating to the recruitment of children and their protection in armed conflict must be based on a request from the parties concerned and an immediate end to the enlistment and recruitment of children. We believe that yet another important element is to ascertain the veracity of information submitted to the Security Council on situations in which the enlistment of children in armed conflict in some countries has been alleged. We also believe that it is important to ensure respect for States' obligations under international agreements, particularly the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to urge all States to fulfil their obligations in accordance with the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Times of War. In our region, many serious breaches of that Convention have occurred under the Israeli occupation of Arab lands.

We further believe that it is of utmost importance to focus greater attention on the root causes of conflict and on the motivations and reasons for the enlistment of children. That will ensure the appropriate way of addressing this issue in a definitive manner.

Syria attaches special importance to issues relating to children and to their care. We follow up national plans at the highest political levels in relation to child-related issues. At the level of international cooperation, the Syrian Government has agreed to sign the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which it ratified in 1993. Syria was among the first States to ratify the Convention, proceeding from its conviction of the importance of the Convention's provisions to ensure the protection and well-being of children everywhere.

Syria believes that children represent our hope and our future. We believe that, in that respect, children must enjoy well-being and attention. The international community must therefore make every possible effort to safeguard that hope and that future.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of Mexico, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for presenting his report on the impact of armed conflict on children. I wish to emphasize that the report was prepared with an innovative approach that will undoubtedly affect the way in which the Security Council deals with this and other issues in the future.

There is no doubt that progress has been made in regulating this area. In my country's opinion, the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child regarding the recruitment of children in armed conflict and the Statute of the International Criminal Court are important developments reflecting the will of States to strengthen the legal framework for the protection of children. However, as practice shows, the enactment of norms is insufficient if it is not accompanied by action to ensure their full implementation.

The advances that we have achieved have therefore been inadequate to reverse a phenomenon of which we are seeing increasing evidence. My delegation completely shares the indignation expressed

here by the Permanent Representative of Germany. Such acts do indeed elicit outrage; among the many horrible crimes committed in situations of armed conflict, one that leaves an indelible mark on the future is violence against and abuse of children, particularly girls, in armed conflict. It is not enough to make statements or to enact new international legal norms. We must act forcefully and effectively.

That is why it is essential to emphasize that the report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict is particularly clear and stark. That document leads to the inevitable conclusion that the United Nations must take concrete and immediate action to strengthen the protection of children in situations of conflict and to ensure that those who violate their obligations in this connection will be sought out, brought to justice and punished.

It is therefore particularly important and promising that the International Criminal Court can begin its work. It is our hope that this new body will take immediate measures to bring under its jurisdiction those who are proven to have committed violations against and recruited children in armed conflict. The work of the International Criminal Court in this field must serve to encourage national legal systems to adopt much more vigorous measures in the fight against that scourge.

The situations described in the report of the Secretary-General are very telling. Children are being exploited, abused, recruited to participate in hostilities, compelled to work in the exploitation of natural resources, separated from their families and denied access to the most basic services. They fall victim to such contagious diseases as AIDS that are particularly virulent among the child population. Mexico condemns violations of international humanitarian and human rights law and urges the international community to remain alert to violations of its norms.

The suffering inflicted on minors by those who are duty-bound to protect them cannot continue to be tolerated. Mexico therefore expresses its support for the recommendations of the Secretary-General and is prepared to cooperate with the United Nations in their implementation. In this regard, we appreciate the quality and frankness of the statement made by Ms. Bellamy and the commitment of Mr. Otunnu in this regard. We hope that codes of conduct will very soon be reflected in verifiable results. We note with particular interest the annex to the report containing the list of parties to armed conflict that continue to recruit or use child soldiers. The thorough formulation of the list, based on reliable information, undoubtedly constitutes very important progress.

Once groups that violate international humanitarian law have been detected, the United Nations must consider the type of actions that can be taken to put an end to such violations. We trust that, on the basis of those lists, the States on whose territory such violations are committed will deal directly with remedying them. But we also hope that other States, the United Nations, other international organizations — especially non-governmental organizations — and the industry that produces and sells weapons will promote the cessation of such actions and practices, and that such actions and practices can be punished. Such efforts must be directed not only at countries in which the Security Council has commitments related to the maintenance of peace and security; follow-up must be carried out in all countries where the phenomenon of recruiting children in armed conflicts occurs, whether or not those countries are on the Council's agenda.

The integration of a child protection perspective in United Nations peacekeeping operations, the inclusion of child protection experts in concrete operations, more training in that sphere for personnel participating in such operations, and robust sanctions against those who carry out acts that violate international humanitarian norms — especially acts against the civilian population — are undoubtedly positive measures that we must continue to develop and promote. We believe that United Nations actions aimed at the general protection of civilians in armed conflicts — such as the separation of civilians and combatants; the placement of refugee camps; and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programmes — contribute in an important way to the protection of children. But, from that perspective, it is also clear that the specific needs of minors require policies, measures and criteria in the field, as well as child protection experts who can implement them. In addition, we welcome the creation of a child protection unit within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States and the assessment activities being carried out jointly with the United Nations in the Mano River region.

Under international humanitarian law, all parties to conflicts must permit humanitarian access. Mexico

supports current efforts to facilitate access by humanitarian agencies and organizations to all areas where conflict situations occur. As I pointed out last December in my statement on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts, the participation of non-governmental organizations in this effort is vital. Often, they are the international community's only presence in conflict zones.

That is why Mexico joined the French initiative to convene a meeting of Security Council members yesterday, under the Arria formula, in which non-governmental organizations interested in this subject — under the umbrella of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and the Watch List on Children and Armed Conflict network — participated in a frank and interactive dialogue. At that meeting, valuable points of view were exchanged and conclusions were reached that could lead to better measures to protect children in armed conflicts.

Among such measures, we would highlight recommendations made by non-governmental organizations to strengthen follow-up and monitoring mechanisms implemented by international organizations, in particular the United Nations. It was also proposed that an informal Security Council group be established to assess compliance with applicable international norms by parties to conflict that are mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299). In addition, the desirability of having more child protection advisers in the field and of taking special education and prevention measures aimed at halting the spread of the devastating AIDS epidemic among children was mentioned.

No effort aimed at protecting children in armed conflicts can be complete unless all personnel participating in humanitarian missions observe appropriate behaviour in their dealings with civilians, especially with children. Mexico reiterates its appeal that other associated parties — such as the civilian police and military forces working under the direction of the United Nations, as well as non-governmental organizations — observe appropriate and scrupulous behaviour in their dealings with civilians. Mexico also appeals to troop-contributing countries and to the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of including a clause in which observance of the six principles elaborated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee is contemplated.

In conclusion, Mexico is a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Internal measures are now under way to permit our ratification of the Statute of the International Criminal Court. At the same time, we are promoting an internal culture of protection and respect for the rights of children at all times, in all places and under all circumstances. My country is convinced that broad dissemination of information concerning children's rights and the consequences of their violation is a very valuable tool. In that connection, we agree with the Secretary-General's observations contained in his report.

In its resolution 1379 (2001), the Security Council manifested its decision to be actively concerned with the protection of children in armed conflict. We encourage the Council to continue to completely fulfil that commitment.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for introducing his report (S/2002/1299), to Olara Otunnu for all the work that he is doing, and to Carol Bellamy for her contribution to today's discussion.

Unfortunately, the suffering of children as a result of hunger, disease and violence remains a bitter reality today. The changed nature of armed conflicts has meant that more than 90 per cent of their victims are now civilians and at least half of them are children, who account for more than 65 per cent of refugees and internally displaced persons. Protecting the rights of children, including those in armed conflict and post-conflict situations, is one of the international community's most important tasks.

The best way to protect children is to prevent conflicts from erupting or to settle them before they become destructive. The role of the United Nations and of the Security Council — which bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security — is difficult to overestimate here. However, the practical implementation of humanitarian objectives aimed at protecting children, including those in armed conflicts, should be the prerogative primarily of specialized organizations and humanitarian agencies: the World Health Organization, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and other bodies that have their own mandates

and are operationally and financially autonomous. Of course, they must function with the Council's overall political support.

The problems faced by children are far from being limited to armed conflict. The protection of children must be seen in a broader context. Child abandonment, drug addiction, trafficking — including trafficking in children's organs and tissues — and child sexual exploitation are but part of the full and tragic list of problems that are threatening children today, and which threaten the future of mankind as a whole.

A separate point must be made about the problem of terrorism, which is becoming increasingly ruthless and which spares neither adults nor children. It is our shared obligation to establish reliable barriers to the spread of this scourge, as well as to other widespread inequities. One of those barriers could, and indeed should, be the International Criminal Court (ICC), whose Statute entered into force last year. We are convinced that the ICC will merge harmoniously into the existing system for maintaining international peace and security, with the United Nations and the Security Council playing a key role. This will ensure that there is no evasion of punishment for the most heinous international crimes, including crimes against children.

An important milestone was the entry into force, on 12 February 2002, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. This instrument should facilitate the full protection of children from the horrors of war.

We commend the Secretary-General on his report. We would like to touch on a couple of points that we believe are of priority importance. First and foremost, I would like to refer to the problem of the use of child soldiers by armed groups, so-called rebels and terrorist groups. We strongly condemn the recruitment of child soldiers, and we believe that those guilty of it should be brought to justice. We support the efforts of the Secretary-General and of his Special Representative to identify parties to armed conflicts that continue this shameful practice. By combating the use of children in hostilities we are not just protecting them from the horrors of war, we are also preventing their inevitably becoming anti-social adult members of society. A child traumatized by war early in his life and who knows nothing except weapons, hatred and violence will hardly be able to live normally under conditions of peace and law and order.

Another important subject is that of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. Children, and girls in particular, are the most vulnerable group in this regard during conflict situations. We are outraged that sexual violence is practised not only by members of armed groups but also by humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers, namely, people in whom victims place special trust and who are expected to provide only kindness and help. Russia fully supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative to provide comprehensive training for United Nations personnel, to monitor their conduct and to prevent impunity for perpetrators.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's approach to this issue by integrating the child factor into the mandates of peacekeeping operations, providing humanitarian agencies with access to conflict areas and separating civilians from armed elements and maintaining the civilian nature of areas in which refugees and internally displaced persons are assembled. Further increasing the work done by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in the area of information and education at the country level will help us achieve our common goals.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. I also wish to thank you for having called this meeting to debate this painful subject.

Since this body began to focus special attention on this subject, just a few months ago, thousands of children have been killed or wounded in armed conflicts in a world that still has learned neither to settle its disputes through peaceful means nor to prevent the additional crime of involving children in the calamities of war and armed conflict. Nevertheless, Chile maintains its faith that multilateral efforts can at least lead to reduce the magnitude of this problem. However, that will be possible only if the Security Council puts the entire weight of its authority behind identifying and punishing those responsible for the worst violations of human rights, which affect those who are most vulnerable and least able to defend themselves.

In that connection, we attach special importance to the content of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299). We support fully the call to action made today by Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and by Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). I would also like to say that we fully endorse the statement to be made by the delegation of Austria in its capacity as the Chair of the Human Security Network, of which Chile, along with 12 other countries, is a member. As is well known, one of the priorities on that group's agenda since its establishment in 1999 has been the situation of children in armed conflict. The Network is currently engaged in promoting concrete projects to make progress on its agenda.

Children have rights. However, their rights are being ignored every day in situations of armed conflict, whether those conflicts are of an inter-State or intra-State nature, whether they are of low intensity or whether they involve armed violence in the context of civil war. In that connection, we are deeply concerned about the continued denial of access to conflict areas for humanitarian purposes by States and non-State actors alike. We call on the parties involved in conflicts to end this situation, which, as the report of the Secretary-General points out, constitutes a violation of both humanitarian law and human rights.

We also wish to point out that we are alarmed at the fact that some parties to armed conflicts continue to recruit or use children in violation of international obligations incumbent upon them. In that regard, we resolutely join in the appeal made by the Secretary-General for measures to be taken to create monitoring mechanisms aimed at preventing these situations from continuing. We welcome as a significant step in that regard the list of parties to conflict drawn up in accordance with the provisions of resolution 1379 (2001), which we hope will be expanded in the future and complemented by initiatives to strengthen political will among those parties to resolve their respective situations with a view to being removed from the list.

Chile attaches particular importance to the appointment of special child protection advisers as part of peacekeeping operations. We hope that this practice will continue and be further strengthened. In that connection, we firmly support the recommendation of the Secretary-General to include a child protection adviser in the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. We also welcome the development of guidelines for the inclusion of child protection in peacemaking and peace-building activities, as well as the initial version of training materials for peacekeeping personnel. We hope that in both of these areas consideration will be given to education on the rights of children and adolescents. We believe that education on this subject constitutes one of the fundamental pillars for achieving lasting protection. That conviction is shared by the members of the Human Security Network and is reflected in past and current activities promoted by the Network in the areas of children in armed conflict and human rights.

Moreover, in addition to the preventive measures that we believe should be adopted, we urge that efforts be made to ensure that, in the event of armed conflict, education continues to be provided throughout the duration of the conflict. That will facilitate the subsequent reintegration of those children into society, in which they can feel useful and have an opportunity to participate. Chile considers that it is very important to ensure that children are able to participate in the process of post-conflict reconstruction. Without doubt, not only their interests but also their points of view should be taken into account in peace processes.

Testimonials such as "When I grow up, I will form a gang and avenge my father" from an Afghan refugee child, or the images that reach us daily of Palestinian and Israeli children killed by acts of terror not only move us and deserve our most profound condemnation but should also spur us to commit to an even more active participation in the collective effort that is needed to achieve the full implementation of resolutions 1261 (1999), 1314 (2000) and 1379 (2001), which were adopted consecutively over the past three years.

Evidence of that commitment is the signing and ratification by Chile of the principal international instruments establishing norms in this field. Thus, Chile ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, recently signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict — which is in the process of ratification by the Congress — and ratified International Labour Organization Convention No. 182, concerning the elimination of the worst forms of child labour. We have also subscribed to the Rome Statute, which created the International Criminal Court. With respect to the Court, we wish to express our satisfaction at the fact that it

qualifies the recruitment of children under the age of 15 years as a war crime.

Along those same lines, we have reiterated our commitment in regional consensuses such as the Kingston Consensus, adopted by all countries of Latin America in October 2000, or through our active participation in forums such as the Latin American and Caribbean Conference on the Use of Children as Soldiers, which was held in July 1999, and in the meeting of experts on the same subject held in December 1999.

Chile wishes to reiterate its commitment to contributing actively to the elimination of all forms of violence that affect children, from armed conflicts to urban violence. We will resolutely join all initiatives that seek compliance with the international agreements in this field. From a medium- to long-term perspective, our efforts should be oriented to guarantee the human security of children today, in an effort that would gradually lead to the development of our societies in conditions of harmony, free of intolerance and protective of their domestic peace. The sooner we act for the benefit of children today, the sooner we will improve conditions for future generations. We are faced with a collective responsibility that affects the effectiveness of this Council and human dignity.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, I would first like to congratulate you on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for the month of January. I join in the tribute you paid to the presidency of Ambassador Alfonso Valdivieso during the month of December and to the important contribution of the five members of the Security Council whose mandate ended in December: Colombia, Ireland, Mauritius, Norway and Singapore.

Bulgaria thanks you, Sir, for convening this important meeting of the Security Council to examine one of the most painful problems on our agenda. The Secretary-General has submitted to us an important report (S/2002/1299), which should become a milestone. Bulgaria fully associates itself with it. I also pay tribute to the extremely vigorous and effective work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. I thank him for his presentation of the report. I also thank Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The Greek Presidency of the European Union will shortly make a detailed statement in the course of this meeting. Bulgaria, as an associated country of the European Union, fully associates itself with that statement.

Today's meeting is a decisive stage in the efforts to end the recruitment of children in armed conflicts and their use as soldiers. The role of the Security Council is fundamental to those efforts, and Bulgaria welcomes that role.

In your introductory remarks, Sir, you used the word "scandal". You were right, for it is indeed a scandal. We are dealing with a violation of the most elementary of human rights: the right of all children to live in peace and security. It was shocking to hear Ms. Bellamy state that 300,000 children are currently serving as soldiers.

Beyond the statements that we can make today in the Security Council Chamber, what is important for the Council to do is, above all, to continue its efforts on this very important subject. One cannot overestimate the importance of a solid framework of norms, which is starting to be established and which has an impact on the ground.

The report of the Secretary-General took an innovative approach on this issue by exposing those who violate humanitarian laws. The report includes a list of parties to armed conflicts that recruit or use child soldiers, in violation of relevant international obligations with respect to the issues on the Council's agenda. We hope that this approach will make it possible to better identify responsibilities and to have more precise information. Individuals guilty of exploiting children during conflicts should not enjoy impunity or benefit from amnesty provisions.

Bulgaria welcomes the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflicts and of the International Criminal Court, which constitute a cornerstone in our collective efforts to put an end to the use of child soldiers. Those two important treaties, ratified by Bulgaria, are a good basis for reinforcing the responsibility of those that commit crimes against humanity, including the conscription and recruitment of children under the age of 15 into armed forces and the use of children in hostilities.

Arria formula meetings with representatives of non-governmental organizations have also contributed to the Council's debates on the peace process. They indicate the need for close cooperation on this issue between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict and the various partners of the United Nations system, particularly the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNICEF. I take this opportunity to thank the delegation of Mexico, and Ambassador Aguilar Zinser in particular, for organizing the latest Arria formula meeting.

Bulgaria recognizes the great importance of Security Council resolution 1379 (2001) and its specific role in making progress, particularly with regard to raising public awareness and the integration of child protection questions in peace programmes and peace agreements. Bulgaria is aware of the important role of child protection advisers. However, the outcome of the resolution is not entirely satisfactory. Despite the progress made, the overall situation of children exposed to war remains serious and totally unacceptable.

Accordingly, we must respond to Mr. Otunnu's appeal for ongoing Council monitoring of this issue in line with the modalities he outlined. We share the common concern expressed by Council members about how to have an impact on children on the ground. The normative framework has been more or less established. The challenge now is to find ways to implement it and make sure that it is complied with. The Secretary-General said earlier that it is time to usher in an era of application and respect for norms, and Bulgaria supports this appeal.

We welcome the very important role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in combating the use of child soldiers in armed conflicts. The report prepared by the coalition of NGOs is a valuable document; it is important that the Council draw on the wisdom and ideas contained in that report.

Bulgaria believes that the draft resolution prepared under the guidance of the French delegation is a decisive step. By adopting that draft resolution in due course the Council would reaffirm its resolve to keep the question of children affected by armed conflict as a priority issue on its agenda. The draft resolution is another effective step to make the world a safer place for all children. My delegation would like to thank you, Mr. President, for the extremely useful work of the French delegation in preparing it.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank the representative of Bulgaria for the kind words addressed to my delegation.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to align the United Kingdom with the statement to be delivered later by Greece, which holds the Presidency of the European Union.

I am very grateful to the Secretary-General for his report (S/2002/1299) and for his presentation this morning. I am grateful too for the briefings we have heard from the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Olara Otunnu, and the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Carol Bellamy. Both their organizations are doing crucial work which the United Kingdom commends and continues to support in practice.

It is good to note that since the last open debate in the Security Council and the adoption of resolution 1379 (2001), the normative framework for child protection has continued to strengthen. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court are real steps forward in terms of protecting human rights.

The United Kingdom agrees fully with the report's call for effective implementation to complement the normative framework. The two reinforce each other. We should regularly review resolution 1379 (2001) in conjunction with the Secretary-General's reports and see what the Council can do to strengthen this agenda in practical terms. Mr. Otunnu's proposals in his description this morning of the era of application are very relevant in this respect. With practical steps in mind, let me focus on three aspects raised in the Secretary-General's report.

First, with respect to mainstreaming, we are glad to note that an inter-agency working group, involving UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) and the Office of the Special Representative, will do further work on developing guidelines on the integration of child protection issues into United Nations peace efforts and that this work will make constructive use of

the Executive Committee on Peace and Security discussions. We firmly believe that protection and assistance measures must go together. It follows, then, that there is no alternative to mainstreaming protection concerns into the body of our peace and security objectives.

The United Kingdom has consistently called for this type of cross-cutting, integrated approach to take root across the range of United Nations protection work. We did so on women, peace and security in October last year and again in December on protection of civilians. Paragraph 6 of resolution 1379 (2001) is very closely linked, for example, with many of the 13 elements contained in the aide-memoire on the protection of civilians (S/PRST/2002/6, annex). We look forward in future reports to hearing how this integrated approach is developing and how it is being taken forward consistently across the system. We would like to have early feedback on how the Executive Committee is using these guidelines, as well as on how United Nations peace missions have benefited from child protection components and what lessons follow for other United Nations missions. Improving resources is part of this, certainly, but so is better planning. We still need more information on where the constraints to better implementation lie so that we can move beyond advocacy to sustained action.

The second element is small arms and light weapons. The literature on this subject is littered with examples of the devastating effects of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in fuelling conflicts and prolonging suffering. Graça Machel tells us in her recent book that in a number of African countries, $5 can buy a bag of maize or a well-worn but serviceable weapon. The Secretary-General asks the international community to do more to sever the link between the proliferation and widespread use of small arms and light weapons and the horrendous numbers of civilian casualties, including among children, that results from their use, especially in Africa. The United Kingdom agrees wholeheartedly with his call.

We are organizing a meeting in London starting today to discuss with Group of Eight (G-8) partners how we can improve common controls on small arms and light weapons transfers. As part of the G-8 Africa Action Plan on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, we will be exploring how we can provide assistance to African countries to promote regional trans-border cooperation and enforcement regimes to combat the proliferation of small arms. We look forward to briefing the Secretariat on the outcome of that conference. We also encourage Japan to build on this work when it chairs this year's follow-up conference on the Programme of Action which Member States agreed to in July 2001 at the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects.

The third element is the impact of illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, report of the Panel of Experts with regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (S/2002/1146) noted that children are being conscripted and used as forced labour in natural resource extraction by a number of armed groups. We commend the Panel for its attention to this issue and would like to be fully informed of these activities in the context of our future discussions on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and on the mandate of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Council colleagues might like to be aware that the United Kingdom is hosting an international workshop in London next month which will take forward an initiative launched by the Prime Minister at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg last year. The objective is to promote greater transparency of payments and revenues in extractive sectors.

In too many countries, the abuse of these resources and the opacity of wealth distribution arising from their exploitation constitute a massive blow to prospects for peaceful development and growth. Again, we will be pleased to pass on the conclusions of the conference to United Nations partners.

Our attention is drawn to the list presented in the Secretary-General's report of violators in five specific countries. Of the five countries on this list — Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Somalia — three — Afghanistan, Burundi and Liberia — appear in the forward programme of work for the Security Council this month. Referring back to our calls for sustained mainstreaming of child protection and protection of civilians, we call for future consultations to provide a higher profile to protection concerns within those countries, where violations of protection constitute a

clear threat to already fragile peace and security environments.

We expect the work of the inter-agency working group referred to in the report to play an active part in the regular briefings provided to the Council and in the Council's subsequent discussions of these countries. The Council will in this way become better briefed on the kind of measures which we can take to deal with protection violations in those countries. The report points out that we have already begun to do this as we move to give life to the provisions of resolution 1379 (2001). But operative paragraph 9 (b) of that resolution is particularly relevant. Material measures may need further discussion in the Council, not least in respect of the violating parties in the five countries mentioned in the Secretary-General's list.

I am glad to acknowledge the efforts of countries on the Security Council's agenda where conflicts have recently ended and where there is no evidence of child recruitment. We encourage the continued engagement of the Economic and Social Council in developing disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes that take into account the specific needs of children and of other vulnerable groups in building the conditions for post-conflict recovery.

We also note several countries that are not included on the list but where the problem of child soldiers is persistent. We are especially concerned about Burma, where consistent reports indicate wide, systematic and forced recruitment and training of children for use in combat. Combined with access restrictions to vulnerable communities in the country, this provides a serious impediment to the most basic of human rights.

The Secretary-General's report points out the continued need for strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanisms. We agree. But I also underline the need for us to work to the fullest extent possible with existing system architecture. We do not have to invent new structures or mechanisms. We just need to insist on efficient and coherent management of the system in place and on results that make a difference on the ground.

As Carol Bellamy has reminded us, we have made promises that we have to keep.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): My delegation wants to thank the President of the Security Council for putting this important topic on our agenda. We also thank the Secretary-General for his very useful report on children in armed conflict and for his statement this morning. We thank also the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, for his important work and for the progress he has helped achieve in this area.

The use of children as combatants is one of the worst aspects of contemporary warfare. Young girls and boys are especially vulnerable to exploitation during warfare and its aftermath. They are unable to protect themselves, and they are stripped of their opportunity for better lives. Over 300,000 children are used in government or rebel forces in more than 30 armed conflicts around the world. These children serve as soldiers, runners, guards, sex slaves and spies.

Our children are our future. Allowing their exploitation in armed conflicts does irrevocable harm to them, and it diminishes the future for all — robbing a people of the future leaders they will need to reconstruct their society when the conflict ends; scarring the next generation that a society needs to reconcile and find justice when the killing stops; distorting the next generation's perspectives and diminishing the contribution it can make to rebuild the economy and social structure; and often irreparably harming the child's opportunity for a healthy, productive and normal life. We therefore have a special responsibility to make extra efforts to protect the children caught in the destructive cauldron of armed conflict.

The United States has been supporting, and wants to continue to support, the important efforts to end the use of child soldiers contrary to international law. We want to support efforts to end the exploitation of girls and boys in armed conflict.

In his report, the Secretary-General touches upon a number of areas in which children today tragically suffer as a consequence of their exploitation in armed conflicts. As noted in the report, when war displaces families and communities, children often spend their entire childhood in camps, where they are at risk of exploitation and forcible recruitment by armed groups.

In armed conflicts, girls and young women are present in many of today's fighting forces. These child soldiers — boys and girls — are the result of a cynical exploitation that exacerbates the violence and great

suffering endemic in any conflict. We must do better to protect the human rights of children caught in armed conflict. We must do better to protect their future.

The United States strongly supports setting 18 as the minimum age for compulsory recruitment by State actors and for recruitment or use in hostilities by non-State actors. We also support having States take all feasible measures to ensure that members of their armed forces who are under 18 years of age do not take a direct part in hostilities.

We support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict as he works to obtain commitments for the protection and well-being of children in conflict and post-conflict situations.

The United States supports the principle that child protection should be an explicit feature in peacekeeping mandates and, where appropriate, that child protection advisers be part of United Nations peace operations.

The United States supports the working group on child protection, training for peace personnel, and developing training materials that can be adapted to the mandate of peace operations and employed to train military police and civilian personnel.

My delegation was pleased to learn of the progress that is being made to implement various Security Council resolutions to protect children in armed conflict. As the Security Council discussed during its deliberations last fall on the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, it is especially important that humanitarian access by State or non-State actors be allowed, consistent with humanitarian law.

The United States joins others in opposing the illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources in conflict zones. We must be mindful to mitigate the adverse impact on children. In the Interlaken declaration of 5 November 2002, the United States joined 47 other Governments pledging to eliminate conflict diamonds from international trade through the implementation of a global rough diamond certification system.

The United States applauds the progress by regional and subregional organizations in making children and armed conflict a priority concern in their policies and programmes.

I turn now to the one of the most important aspects of the Secretary-General's report. For the first time, in response to a Security Council request — in resolution 1379 (2001) — this report from the Secretary-General explicitly names Governments and armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers in violation of their international obligations. Such public exposure can be a powerful tool to expose violators, hold them to account and, hopefully, better protect children in armed conflicts.

The list names 23 armed parties to conflicts in five countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and Somalia. Let me comment briefly about each of these.

Significant positive progress has been made in Afghanistan since the inception of the Bonn process just over one year ago. As the Secretary-General's report notes, the Afghan National Army will not recruit underage soldiers. Despite the use of child soldiers by factions, the lives of Afghan children have improved markedly. Since October 2001, America's Fund for Afghan Children has raised $11.4 million, including more than $1 million in the past three months. Refugee and internally displaced children are perhaps Afghanistan's most vulnerable. The United States has donated more than $145 million over the past year to assist in resettlement.

Although Burundi has not received the same attention as Afghanistan, the situation there is extremely volatile, and the international community must be vigilant in preventing a catastrophe on the scale witnessed by Burundi's neighbour in the recent past. There have been encouraging developments, but circumstances in Burundi are still such that children continue to be exploited as combatants. Our work towards any peace agreement to prevent inherent instability and danger should prohibit the use of children in armed conflicts.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo we have witnessed the sad exploitation of children in war over the past few years. Human Rights Watch reports that official communication from the Government has called on children between 12 and 20 years old to enlist. Meanwhile, rebel groups have habitually recruited children to aid their causes. While the task before us is difficult, it is important. There are ways to help these victims. There are ways to improve opportunities for exploited children. For instance, the

United States continues to support the work of the Displaced Children and Orphans Fund and the Patrick J. Leahy War Victims Fund, both of which offer grants to rehabilitate children soldiers in the region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and around the world.

The Government of Liberia's flagrant failure to adhere to international law is a major factor contributing to the ongoing instability in West Africa. The armed forces of Charles Taylor, the President of Liberia, and the militias he has backed have a record of recruiting underage children. As long as his Government continues to support civil strife in West Africa, the threat to the region's children is real, the damage great. The international community must be vigilant.

In Somalia, the situation is just as grave. Reports have indicated that boys as young as 14 and 15 years old have participated in militia attacks. Faction leaders recruit young boys to serve as personal bodyguards. Yet the situation could get worse if the international community does not make an extra effort to protect those children. Some recent estimates suggest that there are at least 175,000 internally displaced children in Somalia. This ongoing tragedy cannot be tolerated. We must do better to ensure that these children are not subject to exploitation.

As I noted, explicitly naming Governments and armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers, in violation of their international obligations, can be a powerful tool in our efforts to protect children in armed conflict. These obnoxious practices cannot stand the light of scrutiny. The perpetuators of the abuse of children in armed conflict want to remain in the shadows, hidden from scrutiny, protected from accountability. Our moral and legal obligations compel us to force these harmful practices, these damaging activities, into the light of day. Impunity in this area is unacceptable. The crushing consequences on children in armed conflict must be ameliorated. A better future depends on it; a society's reconciliation, justice and opportunity after the killing stops require it.

The Secretary-General's report is a good start in response to the Security Council's request for a list drawn from countries currently on the Security Council's active agenda. However, some of the worst violators of children in armed conflict are not included on the list, even though they are mentioned in the report. For example, Burma is an area of concern. It is thought to have the largest number of child soldiers in the world. Human Rights Watch recently reported that there is widespread forced recruitment of boys as young as 11 in Burma. Reportedly, children are routinely picked up on the streets, forced into the army, and never see their families again. According to Human Rights Watch, many children are forced to fight against armed ethnic opposition groups and to carry out human rights abuses, such as rounding up villagers for forced labour, burning houses and even massacring civilians. Armed opposition groups forcibly recruit young children.

In Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has waged a civil war against the Government of Uganda since the mid-1980s, and has abducted between 10,000 and 16,000 children from northern Uganda to serve as soldiers. Children are forced to participate in acts of extreme violence. Girls as young as 12 are given to commanders as wives. Some abducted children have managed to escape, while others have died from disease, mistreatment or combat wounds. In recent months, reports of abductions have risen. One non-governmental organization estimates that 4,000 children have been abducted just since June 2002.

Colombia's children have long been caught up in the country's devastating conflict, including some 6,000 to 14,000 who are currently used as soldiers by armed groups, paramilitaries and militias. Boys and girls, some as young as 8 years old, are often recruited forcibly and used as combatants, spies, human shields, messengers, porters, kidnappers, guards, cooks, sexual companions or slaves, or for placing and/or removing bombs. Girls in armed groups and in paramilitary groups are particularly at risk for sexual abuse.

Clearly, the abuse of children in armed conflict goes beyond the scope of the Secretary-General's current report. And clearly, we have a moral responsibility, a moral imperative, to leave no child behind. We cannot ignore the damage to children in armed conflicts, wherever that devastation occurs. Therefore, the United States would like to see the Secretary-General submit a list to the Security Council next year of the worst abusers of children in armed conflicts, not limited to countries currently on the Security Council's agenda. And the United States would like to see active monitoring of those that have already been named.

In conclusion, let me again thank the Secretary-General and Olara Otunnu for their good work and contribution in this area. It is extremely important. Our children are our future. We must be more vigorous and more vigilant in working to protect children in armed conflict.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): Let me, in this open meeting, formally congratulate you, Sir, on assuming the presidency of the Council for this inaugural month of 2003. I wish also to express our admiration for Ambassador Valdivieso's skilful leadership of the Council last month.

The Council's consideration of thematic issues has proved to be a useful modality to address issues of special concern — political and moral — in the context of the promotion of peace and security. As we conduct this fourth debate on children and armed conflict, the Pakistan delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2002/1299) and his thoughtful statement this morning, as well as to his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for his diligent work to raise awareness and promote effective action to eliminate the blight visited on children during aimed conflicts. This was also reflected in the comprehensive statement made by Mr. Olara Otunnu to the Council. My delegation also welcomes the work being performed by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the protection of children in armed conflicts, as outlined by Ms. Bellamy in her statement this morning.

It is appalling that, over the past decade, 2 million children have been killed in conflicts, more than 1 million orphaned, more than 6 million seriously injured and tens of thousands, especially girls, subjected to rape as a deliberate instrument of policy. As one of the six initiators of the 1990 World Summit for Children, Pakistan is committed to resolutely eliminating the pervasive suffering imposed on children in armed conflicts. We believe that we can make an important contribution to that objective as a member of the Security Council and as a major troop-contributing country to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

The Secretary-General's report has observed the impressive gains made in codifying international norms and standards for the protection of children. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by 191 countries, and its Optional Protocol on children in armed conflict came into operation on 21 January 2002. Those instruments categorically prohibit the direct participation in hostilities, compulsory recruitment or use in any non-governmental armed group of children under 18. World leaders gathered at last year's special session of the General Assembly on children resolved to protect children from the impact of armed conflict and to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law and human rights. They also committed themselves to end the recruitment of children and to ensure their demobilization, effective disarmament, rehabilitation and social reintegration.

Unfortunately, progress in setting norms and undertaking commitments has not yet translated into significant amelioration of the tragedies afflicting children in armed conflicts. According to the Secretary-General's report, about 300,000 children, some as young as 8, are still being used to fight in 33 contemporary conflicts in various parts of the world. More than 20 million children have been displaced by conflicts. More than 10 million suffer serious psychological trauma.

The Security Council must respond to this challenge. It must make an important contribution to ameliorating the suffering of children in armed conflicts. It must, first and foremost, seek to exercise more effectively its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Council can do much more in preventing the outbreak of conflicts in the first place. We are convinced that the Council has yet to fully explore and exploit the vast potential for conflict prevention and conflict resolution offered to it by the provisions of the Charter, especially Chapter VI, relating to the pacific settlement of disputes. In this context, it is essential to emphasize the central responsibility of the Council to secure respect for and implementation of its own resolutions relating to peace and security.

Secondly, the Council must address the seriously growing deficit in respect for international humanitarian law and human rights, so painfully visible in so many armed conflicts. The atrocities of Rwanda and Srebrenica are still fresh in our minds. The civilian suffering in occupied Palestine and in Jammu and Kashmir is ongoing. The emergence of the International Criminal Court, and the increasing willingness of the international community to penalize gross violations of international humanitarian law and human rights, are welcome signals that atrocities in

armed conflicts will not continue to enjoy impunity in the future.

Thirdly, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's observation that international norms and standards codified for the protection of children should be applied through a strengthened monitoring and reporting mechanism to identify the violators. We note the list in the Secretary-General's report. We know, of course, that it is not exhaustive or complete. We also agree with the Secretary-General that the era of application should encompass the key elements of dissemination, advocacy, monitoring and reporting. We trust that the Council will agree to install such mechanisms. One way of doing so would be to appropriately extend the authority of existing United Nations peacekeeping or observer missions in various conflict areas to perform the task of such humanitarian monitoring and reporting.

Meanwhile, we hope that the concerned parties to armed conflicts in which children are combatants or victims will take resolute action to implement the purpose and aims of the international community as reflected in the Secretary-General's report and in the resolutions adopted by the Council on this item, including the one that we shall approve pursuant to this debate.

Mr. Chungong Ayafor (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for having come personally to introduce his report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299). This proves, if proof were still needed, that he is determined to keep the issue of children affected by armed conflict as one of the top priorities of the international community. I would also like to pay high tribute to Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for her important contribution to the debate. Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, for his excellent statement.

Today, most conflicts, particularly those in Africa, are within States, and their major source is intolerance based on ethnic, linguistic and religious differences. Moreover, they are generally fuelled by illicit economic activities. These conflicts lead to the dissemination of large quantities of light weapons and involve many non-State actors. The combination of these factors exposes children to great risks, including torture, rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, trafficking and, especially, forced recruitment by unscrupulous warlords.

As is rightly stressed in paragraph 21 of the report of the Secretary-General,

> "When war displaces families and communities, children often spend their entire childhood in camps where they are at risk of exploitation and forcible recruitment by armed forces or groups."

According to UNICEF estimates, 300,000 girls and boys have in recent times been involved in some 30 conflicts. This situation is particularly alarming and indeed tragic. That is particularly disquieting, since the international community has established a substantial normative framework for the protection of children, including, for example, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as the Statute of the International Criminal Court.

The Statute makes the forced recruitment of children in armed conflict a war crime. That is an important milestone in suppressing such ignominious actions. Thus one of the major challenges that we face today is the effective implementation of those various instruments.

My delegation welcomes with real satisfaction the Secretary-General's report, which emphasizes the era of application of new, stricter norms to protect children in armed conflict. The report highlights progress made in this area, as well as in implementing the relevant Security Council resolutions. My delegation welcomes in particular the fact that a list has been drawn up of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use child soldiers. That list is a stark warning to parties that violate norms for the protection of children. It makes clear that those who carry out such grave violations will no longer be protected and will have no impunity.

The delegation of Cameroon also welcomes the increased access given to humanitarian services in conflict areas. Efforts made in that respect go a long way towards increasing vaccination coverage, reuniting children separated from their families and providing children in distress with essential goods, thus improving their living conditions.

We would like to congratulate Mr. Olara Otunnu, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, on the

very constructive dialogue in which he has engaged with certain parties to conflict and on the results thus obtained.

Cameroon belongs to a region that is dealing with many armed conflicts. That is why we have adopted several measures to protect civilians in general and children in particular, especially in situations of armed conflict. My country has ratified almost all of the conventions relating to the protection of children. We have signed the Statute establishing the International Criminal Court and are preparing to ratify it. Cameroon remains committed to its tradition of hospitality and takes in thousands of refugee children, whether accompanied or not, coming from several countries of Central Africa and elsewhere. Acting in close cooperation with United Nations agencies and bilateral partners, it provides them with all necessary assistance.

Furthermore, the Government of Cameroon is continuing its policy of protecting children through the prevention of conflict by means of preventive diplomacy with other States of the region within the framework of the subregional organizations, the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights.

Cameroon, like other countries of Central Africa, has taken a number of measures to promote a culture of peace and dialogue. Of course, all of those actions supplement — indeed, dovetail with — all efforts to eradicate poverty and to promote sustainable economic and social development.

In conclusion, Cameroon would like to call upon the international community to continue its efforts to implement norms relating to the protection of children in armed conflict.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to commend you, Mr. President, for having convened this open meeting on an issue as grave and shocking as that of the tragic situation of children in armed conflict. I would also like to pay tribute to the very lucid and courageous statement made by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Olara Otunnu, whom my Office fully supports and will continue to support, both morally and financially. We encourage him in his efforts and request him to continue to fight such appalling excesses, which know no boundaries, whether geographical or otherwise. We also commend the sharp and inspiring statement by Ms. Carol Bellamy.

The report of the Secretary-General is interesting and very clear. It details the atrocities that continue to be committed against children in the context of armed conflict, ranging from their use as sexual slaves in one country to their forced recruitment in a number of others, as well as the devastating effects that AIDS, anti-personnel landmines and something as basic as a lack of access to primary education have on children.

The report is clearly useful, and the fact that it is sometimes very stark in its denunciations is commendable. The facts have thus now been laid bare, at least at the geographical level. There is now a general awareness on the part of the public — thanks in large part to the non-governmental organizations — although that may not yet be sufficient. Furthermore, a legal framework has now been established.

What, then, remains to be done? We must commit ourselves fully, not just partially. As Mr. Otunnu said, we must fully enter the era of implementation. We therefore support his recommendation to examine the actions of the parties to a conflict and give an in-depth and unvarnished account thereof. As the Ambassador of Germany said, the Council must put more bite into its monitoring efforts. In other words, we must take action.

The Council has not remained passive. It has adopted three important resolutions; it has affirmed that the protection of children who are exposed to conflict is something that affects international peace and security. It is desirable that a fourth resolution be adopted soon. Furthermore, many of our countries — mine included — have ratified the important Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Statute of the International Criminal Court. But that is not enough.

Ms. Bellamy courageously mentioned, inter alia, a shocking form of humiliation in the context of the tragic situation of such children — their abuse by humanitarian personnel and by the personnel of peacekeeping forces. She touched a sore spot when she pointed out that this meeting would soon end and that the Council would turn its attention to other burning issues. She reminded us that we cannot be passive, but must go further in determining who is responsible and in ending impunity. She concluded that we were all responsible. In the hardship and suffering of children

and in the atrocities carried out against them — atrocities that we had hoped belonged to terrible periods of the past — all of us have a share of the responsibility.

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): Sir, allow me to reiterate my delegation's congratulations to you on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for January. We assure you of our full cooperation. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his introductory statement, as well as his Special Representative, Mr. Olara Otunnu, for having introduced the report (S/2002/1299) before us, and Ms. Carol Bellamy for her statement.

In the Charter, Member States express their determination to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, to promote social progress, to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security and to ensure that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest. To attain these purposes, my country has always accepted our responsibilities, since the adults that we are today were the children of yesterday; and the children of today will be the adults of tomorrow.

World leaders, mindful of these responsibilities, adopted the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children in the 1990s and the related Plan of Action, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. These were important steps forward in seeking specific solutions to the question of children. The resolutions adopted by the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as the outcome document of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), attest to the determination of the international community to make the question of children more central to its concerns.

Consideration of the report before us attests also to the determination of the Council to shoulder its obligations by giving priority to children, still the stratum of our societies most vulnerable as victims of the disastrous consequences of armed conflict, of forcible recruitment as soldiers or labourers, and of sexual abuse.

My delegation welcomes the taking into consideration, inter alia, of the normative framework, of impunity, and of the inclusion of child protection advisers in peacekeeping operations. There is not the shadow of a doubt that the entry into force of two international instruments — the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) — strengthens the international legal framework to provide greater protection to children in armed conflict and to punish those guilty of serious abuse against them.

We must encourage the efforts undertaken by several States to make their legislation consonant with relevant international norms. We appreciate and support ongoing efforts to integrate and strengthen child protection in peacemaking, peace-building and peacekeeping. We believe that the coordination of activities undertaken by various actors is necessary in this process.

Recent public meetings of the Council on women, peace and security, on small arms and light weapons and on the protection of civilians in armed conflict have helped us appreciate the overall impact of conflicts on children. But they have, above all, been an opportunity to look into several aspects echoed in the present report. These relate, in particular, to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, particularly anti-personnel mines; access by humanitarian bodies to conflict zones; the impact on children of the illicit commercial exploitation of natural resources; and sexual exploitation and sexual violence against children in conflict areas. In my delegation's view, these issues, which were incorporated into the topics of which I just spoke, should be considered by the Council in an interactive framework that would bring together representatives of the various bodies that are responsible for their follow-up. That would make comprehensive consideration possible, while bearing in mind the solutions appropriate to each case.

The aide-memoire and the road map submitted to us for our meetings on the protection of civilians in armed conflict would be extremely useful here. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the list of parties to conflicts that recruit or use children in violation of international provisions that protect them. This sheds further light on the situation of children in armed conflict at various levels. However, we stress that, even if the Council is not directly seized of certain cases, these nevertheless should be given the necessary attention. To that end, it is essential that these lists be

updated for the Council. Only if the international community has access to this information can it ensure implementation, as recommended by the report. We also encourage field missions by Special Representatives. These visits are sources of information and inspiration that inform us about the facts on the ground and help us to take useful steps for future action.

My delegation supports the work of demobilization, retraining and full reintegration of children through providing adequate resources, without which any activity will be doomed to failure. We therefore appeal to donors to give special attention to this problem.

I cannot conclude my statement without referring to the specific situation of children in armed conflict in Africa. Sixty per cent of the items discussed in the Council relate to conflicts in Africa, where children are the prime victims. This is why my delegation stresses that the common destiny of peoples and children of the world, particularly those in Africa, must be built in peace. Peace is possible only if there is development; and development is impossible without peace. This means that, for the developing countries — those in Africa in particular — there must be a minimum of justice in managing their debt, greater opening up of the markets of the North to their commodities with proper remuneration, an increase in official development assistance and real commitment on the part of the international community to resolve these conflicts in all their aspects. To achieve this, there must be coordination among the various United Nations bodies and the agencies involved in enhancing the well-being of children, and between those and regional, subregional and national actors as well.

Finally, we hope that this meeting will help us plan future action on the basis of past experience, so that we can better discharge the historic duty of bequeathing to future generations, the children of today, a world of peace, security, justice, progress and concord.

Mr. Wang Yingfan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation is grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on children and armed conflict (S/2002/1299). In addition, we thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ambassador Olara Otunnu, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund, for their important statements.

The causes and manifestations of the world's armed conflicts are myriad, but, whatever those causes and manifestations may be, as long as there are armed conflicts, children — as the most vulnerable group — will be affected by them to varying degrees. Therefore, the international community must work hard to find an effective solution to the problem.

The protection of children in armed conflicts is an issue with many aspects. The parties to conflicts and the international community as a whole must work together to find an integrated and comprehensive solution. We urge all concerned parties to observe the relevant international laws, to implement in earnest the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocol, to abide by the provisions governing age limits for recruitment and conscription, to work together with the international community to put an end to the enlistment and use of child soldiers, and to carry out the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former child combatants.

At the same time, the international community must step up its efforts to eliminate poverty, to promote universal education and development and to maintain stability. Only when the factors that lead to the abuse of children's lives and interests are eradicated and when an environment that allows their growth and development is created can the protection of children be guaranteed.

We agree that the Security Council should continue to be concerned about the protection of children from the perspective of safeguarding international peace and security. As far as the Council is concerned, taking effective measures to prevent, curb and eliminate armed conflicts is its major responsibility in the protection of children in armed conflicts. In certain regions today, including the Middle East, there are continuing armed conflicts whose most direct victims are children and women. In debating the question of children and armed conflict, the Council and the international community as a whole must attach great importance to undertaking effective measures to protect children in those regions, especially Palestinian children. Moreover, in tackling this issue, the Council must respect and coordinate with other United Nations agencies in order to allow full play for the overall strength of the United Nations.

We should like to pay tribute to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other United Nations agencies, as well as other organizations, for their efforts and achievements over the years with regard to protecting children from the harm of armed conflicts. The Chinese Government will continue to actively support and coordinate with the international community in its efforts to protect children and to make our due contributions to those efforts.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of France.

Nearly every day, we consider crisis situations that are almost always real human tragedies as well. But the recruitment of children in armed conflicts or their use as combatants and the many forms of exploitation that they suffer in conflict zones are particularly intolerable. Such zones are often lawless. To enlist children in armed or paramilitary forces, to take them away from their families, to wound them, to mutilate them — in other words, to raise them in fear and hatred — is, first and foremost, to attack their rights as children. But it is also to attack their future as adults.

Therefore, I am gratified to note that the Security Council remains fully committed with regard to this problem and that today's debate has aroused remarkable interest. By adopting resolution 1379 (2001), on children and armed conflict, on 20 November 2001 — the anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child — the Council carried out just and necessary work. One of that resolution's most innovative aspects was the establishment of a monitoring and follow-up mechanism. Its paragraph 16 requests the Secretary-General to attach to his report a list of parties to armed conflict that recruit or use children in violation of the international obligations applicable to them.

Today, we have an opportunity to consider the report of the Secretary-General (S/2002/1299) for the first time. It cites some encouraging progress. First of all, at the normative level, there is the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and that of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The latter text contains specific provisions regarding the recruitment or use of child soldiers, which is described as a war crime. Then, on the more operational level, there is the integration of the protection of children into the definition of peacekeeping or peace-building operations. But despite that progress, how many intolerable situations are mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General?

Of course, France agrees with those States that believe that we cannot fail to respond to the overwhelming report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Mr. Olara Otunnu. For that reason, we believe that it is a good idea for a follow-up resolution to prepared by the Security Council in order to provide clear guidelines for the next stage. In such a resolution, we must firmly express our will to act.

Without providing an exhaustive list of what we might do, I should like to mention three examples. First, we must ensure that the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers is for the duration and that such children are effectively monitored. That way, we will avoid the phenomenon of reconscription, which we see in some conflict zones. Next, we must end the scandal of the sexual exploitation of children in refugee camps. Finally, and in general terms, we must go further in analysing, following up and monitoring the most troubling situations, whether or not they are included in the list in the annex to the report. With regard to this last point, we obviously must display a certain flexibility in the interpretation of paragraph 16 of resolution 1379 (2001). The criteria defined by that paragraph for drawing up the list must not hinder our determination to tackle the situations that arouse the greatest concern.

I believe that Member States cannot fail to support these guidelines, even though there may be a few differences regarding the practical implementation of actions to be undertaken. We therefore believe and hope that it will be possible to reach a rapid agreement on the text of the follow-up draft resolution with a view to its adoption by the end of the week.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

As there are a number of speakers remaining on my list, and in accordance with the announcement I made at the beginning of the meeting, I propose, with the consent of the Council's members, to suspend the meeting now and to resume it at 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1.10 p.m.